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# Reagan drops Gates as nominee for CIA

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WASHINGTON — Seeking to move his presidency beyond the Iran-contra scandal, President Reagan yesterday withdrew his nomination of Robert M. Gates to become CIA director.

Senate leaders had warned that Gates' nomination might be rejected because of questions about CIA involvement in the sale of arms to Iran raised by the Tower commission report. Gates was deputy director of the agency at the time.

The withdrawal of Gates' nomination was announced at a news conference by the President's new White House chief of staff, Howard H. Baker Jr., who promised that a new candidate would be named soon.

The announcement came after Gates had gone to the White House and requested that his name be withdrawn.

A number of Republicans had urged the White House to drop Gates rather than endure what could be a lengthy confirmation proceeding that would keep attention focused on the Iran controversy.

Among those mentioned as Reagan's new choice for CIA director was former Sen. John G. Tower (R., Texas), head of the commission that last week issued a report on the Iran-contra affair. However, the Washington Post reported in today's editions that Tower had turned down the job.

Also mentioned as contenders for the post are Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force general, national security adviser to President Gerald R. Ford and a member of the Tower commission; FBI Director William H. Webster; and two former CIA deputy directors, John N. McMahon and Bobby R. Inman.

Baker, who spent much of his first day on the job meeting with the President, the cabinet and a new team he has brought into the White House, also announced that Reagan would give his first major speech in three months on the Iran affair at 9 p.m. tomorrow.

Baker refused to say if the Presi-

dent would follow the advice of many Republican leaders and say for the first time that he was wrong to approve arms sales to Iran, but he predicted that the address "will have a profound effect on the country's perception of his role as president and his future ability to govern."

The President also refused reporters' requests at the start of a cabinet meeting to preview his speech. Asked if he was disturbed by the Tower report's conclusion that his lax management style was largely to blame for the controversy, Reagan replied, "I'm disturbed about being pressured to talk about it now."

Baker said the President had planned to come before reporters yesterday to announce his withdrawal of Gates' nomination and to announce his selection of a new candidate to become director of intelligence. But the choice of a new candidate "didn't quite come together" as planned, so Gates' withdrawal was left for the chief of staff to announce, Baker said.

Gates, who at 43 would have become the youngest CIA director, was nominated to succeed William J. Casey, who resigned following his hospitalization for removal of a brain tumor in December.

Gates met with the President yesterday, and the White House later released a letter in which Gates asked that his nomination be withdrawn to avoid "a prolonged period of uncertainty" concerning his confirmation in the Senate. The White House also released a presidential statement in which Reagan agreed to withdraw Gates' name "rather than proceed with extended consideration in the Senate."

The nomination of Gates, a career intelligence official, initially won praise from lawmakers who had dealt with him and had predicted he would be more candid with Congress than Casey. But the early plaudits gave way to doubts as senators questioned the wisdom of confirming anyone associated with the Iran-contra affair, no matter how minor their role.

The reservations snowballed after

the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate committee investigating the affair suggested that it might be prudent to delay a vote on the nomination in case their panel uncovered any new information about Gates.

"In many ways Mr. Gates was a victim of circumstance," said Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman David L. Boren (D., Okla.). "The same kinds of questions would have been raised if St. Peter had been working in the CIA during the past two years and if his name had been sent up to us."

Boren said that the new nominee should come from outside the CIA, and have no link to the Iran-contra affair. "It's very important to get someone who's quickly confirmable," said Boren. "You've got to have somebody who fits the definition of a fresh start."

Boren and Vice Chairman William S. Cohen (R., Maine) said they had not urged Gates to withdraw. But they said made it clear to him in conversations late last week that a vote on his confirmation would be slow in coming, and that the outcome would depend on his answers to questions about his role in the Iran-contra affair.

Taken separately, the allegations against Gates were not considered sufficient to jeopardize his confirmation. But taken together they became "like pin pricks on a hemophiliac," said one congressional investigator.

Perhaps most damaging for Gates was his participation in drafting testimony in November for delivery by Casey before the Senate Intelligence Committee. The testimony was on the Iran arms deal, but it failed to include any mention of a possible diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan contras. Casey and Gates had been alerted to that possibility more than a month earlier.

In a strongly worded letter to Boren yesterday, Gates denied that he had helped to keep information from Congress in an effort to cover up the scandal, or that he had turned a "blind eye" to evidence that Iran profits were going to the contras.

*Charles Green and R.A. Zaldivar of The Inquirer Washington Bureau contributed to this article.*